

## School Improvement Visit Report

Spring Term 2017

### I. Visit Information

**School Name:** Elson Infant School

**Focus:** Report of visit

**Adviser:** Michael Moore

**Local Authority:** Hampshire

**Visit Reference:** Inspection and Advice

**Date of Visit:** 09/01/2017

#### Attendees:

- Executive Headteacher (of Federation)
- Head of school
- English Lead
- Inclusion Lead
- Governor representative

#### Actions:

Action	Who	Timescale
Further improve children's writing by encouraging more oral story-telling, particularly in Reception, as a means of enabling pupils to internalise a repertoire of language and ideas for later, more formal expression.	English Leader	31/03/2017
Continue to develop the role of English lead so that they have sufficient time to monitor progress, support and develop staff and hold others to account for standards in writing.	Assistant Headteacher	31/03/2017
Consider commissioning the support of an external English inspector to offer recommendations for further improvement in writing and also to validate the current quality of provision for writing.	Executive Headteacher	31/03/2017

### **Summary of Main Findings:**

The school has been on an effective improvement journey and in many respects is a better school than when it was judged as good by Ofsted nearly three years ago. Leadership at the school has become more robust and assertive under the executive headteacher's strong influence. There is a highly effective partnership between the executive headteacher and head of school, strongly supported by leadership at all levels, which has moved the school forward.

However, given an inspection could occur by Easter 2017, writing outcomes need to improve. Nevertheless, provision observed, the strength of leadership and the work in pupils' books suggest that current performance is improved. The combined expected standard was well below national for attainment and progress in 2016 but these results broadly reflected the same cohorts GLD results, except in writing.

GLD has been rising steadily for the last three years and is now at national average of 69%.

The quality of teaching and learning is of high quality, with learning journeys skilfully designed to engage children but with clear learning and pedagogical intent underlying the activities.

The actions in the Federation's strategic plan and the actions discussed by leaders specific to Elson Infant school are suitable to continue the school's improvement and refinement.

The school is therefore a **low priority** for Local Authority support because leaders at all levels can demonstrate impact in improving provision and there is currently capacity in the team for this to continue.

## II. Main Report

### Activity reason:

LA Funded.

### Activity focus:

Annual Review visit

### Context:

Elson Infant School is part of a federation with Gomer Infant School. The federation is led by an executive headteacher and each school has a designated head of school and assistant headteacher.

The school was last inspected in May 2014 and judged to be good.

The key area for development was to:

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding levels in order to accelerate the progress of all pupils further by:
  - Ensuring that work is always sufficiently challenging, especially for the most able.
  - Providing more systematic and effective teaching of handwriting skills.
  - Encouraging pupils to develop their responses more fully in class discussions in order to further their language skills.

The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, those in Local Authority care and those with a parent or carer in the armed forces, is below average.

Through the following activities, the enquiry question, "Is the school providing consistent high quality teaching and learning of writing?" was explored.

- A guided learning walk across the school during which brief work scrutiny and discussions with pupils.
- A discussion with pupils about their views on writing.
- A discussion with the English leader, including a work scrutiny, about priorities for the next year.
- A discussion about vulnerable pupils and the evaluation of the school.
- Interpretation of RAISE summary report, Inspection Dashboard and school's current in-house data set.
- A summary discussion with senior leaders and a governor at the end of the visit.

### Commentary:

#### **School self-evaluation**

*Outcomes of most recent Ofsted in brackets*

- Overall effectiveness: G (G)
- Leadership and management: G (G)

- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment: G (G)
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare: G (G)
- Outcomes for pupils: G (G)
- Early years: G (G).

Evidence explored during the visit and over time would indicate that this is an honest reflection of the current position of the school. Leaders are clear about what needs to be refined and there is a strong motivation to bring this about.

Leadership at the school is robust and assertive under the executive headteacher's strong influence. There is a highly effective partnership between the executive headteacher and head of school, strongly supported by leadership at all levels, which has moved the school forward. For example, the English lead, interviewed during this review has a clear picture of their subject's strengths and areas for improvement. They are developing their skills at a strategic level and also has the expertise to support and develop others. She now needs more opportunities to coach, support and monitor.

Professional development opportunities are focussed on appropriate areas. The moderation work of the assistant headteacher has resulted in more personalised professional development of all staff. Teachers are increasingly using video evidence to mentor each other in pairs.

Teachers take time and effort to ensure that learning is interesting. When learning is most effective, the teacher's strong subject knowledge is used imaginatively to ensure high levels of engagement and concentration. From reports from leaders and observations during this review, pupils' work is generally set at the right level of difficulty for most pupils. Adults use precise, simple instructions, high expectations and clear questioning to encourage pupils to think carefully about their learning. As a result, they work at a good pace and with confidence.

Pupils say they like writing and describe 'good writing' as including characters and "lovely sentences". They could begin to describe what made these sentences effective and were very clear that "Writing is hard when you don't have ideas and spelling is difficult." Therefore the school is encouraged to make even better use of the opportunities across the curriculum to encourage more oral story-telling, particularly in Reception, as a means of enabling pupils to internalise a repertoire of language and ideas for later, more formal expression.

Approaches to developing writing are well designed as was seen in the Year 2 class during the review. Pupils were working within the 'imitation stage' of the learning sequence. A team activity had been designed to elicit adjectival vocabulary from the children by asking them to peek inside boxes and describe what they could see. The groups then had to persuade other tables that their examples were the most effective. This was clearly a motivating as well as reflective activity for children of all abilities and was also part of another 'thread' of the learning journey, namely to make a class toolkit for persuasive writing.

Similarly, writing opportunities for the youngest children are carefully designed to be engaging but also to draw out specific concepts or skills that need to be learned. For example, a group of boys were engaged in 'super hero' play with an adult who was also in role. This play nevertheless involved plenty of vocabulary extending talk and opportunities to write on a whiteboard.

Some pupils were using their phonics skills purposefully. For example, a child whilst writing was attempting to spell 'lion'. They looked with intent at the 'sound mat' specifically for the sound they wanted, rather than scanning the whole array available on the mat.

Pupils were observed to be sustaining their focus on their work, many for over 30 minutes.

A subsequent book scrutiny evidenced efficient marking and feedback. Less is written by the teacher, but the skilled use of stamps, codes and highlighting means that pupils could respond to the marking at an age-appropriate level that developed their learning. For example, children had to search for their spelling errors rather than being told, they had opportunities to extend and improve their writing.

Provision for pupils who are not on track to meet age related expectations or need more individualised approaches has been refined. Most additionality now takes place in class and the identified children are taught mostly by the teacher. As well as the impact of precision teaching, this also enables pupils to engage and feel more included in the whole class. As a result many disadvantaged pupils are reported as making accelerated progress and keeping up with peers. The development of the 'Disadvantaged mentor Scheme' is operating in both schools in the federation and is supporting families as well as individual pupils. Early impact is positive. For example, the difference between the most vulnerable and their peers in Year 1 has narrowed. There was a 34% difference in 2015 (similar to national averages) that narrowed

to 25% in 2016 (better than national figures).

**Key strengths: (that would support the self-evaluation grade)**

- The impact of the wider leadership team, with increased distributed leadership and pro-activity is impacting on overall school development.
- GLD has been rising steadily for the last three years and is now at national average of 69%.
- Flexible grouping across all subjects is used well to focus on high expectations for all pupils including those learning at 'greater depth'.
- Pupils express positive mindsets and confidently challenge themselves.
- Effective use of open questioning and follow up by adults is made to elicit deeper thinking and reasoning from the children.
- Behaviour in general and learning behaviours in particular are of high quality.

**Risks (preventing the school from grading the next grade above)**

Given inspection is possible by Easter 2017, writing needs to improve and therefore in-house evidence of current standards and quality are important. For example, the combined expected standard was well below national for attainment and progress, placing the school in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. In particular, boys and middle prior attainers made the least progress. Level 2+ was at or above national in 2015. In 2016 reading and mathematics were not significantly below national but writing, with only 37% of pupils meeting the expected standard was nearly half the national average.

In response to the identified risk, the school has taken assertive and perceptive action. For example, last term, the school focussed on further developing guided reading in Year 1 so that pupils more readily develop and use a range of approaches to decode and interpret text.

As a result, current predictions for 2017 are better than 2016 outcomes. The proportion of pupils predicted to at least meet the expected standard by the end of Key Stage 1 are currently 71% for reading, 78% mathematics and 61% for writing, all three subjects therefore close to 2016 national averages and more reflective of the school's improvement trend over the last three years.

**Funding:**

LLP core funding 9632E.

HIAS and establishment to inform of cancellation at the earliest convenience, every effort will be made to provide alternative arrangements.

HIAS reserves the right to charge if visit is cancelled by the establishment without mutual agreement. Confirmation of School Visit Form will form the basis of charging at the appropriate HIAS rate unless agreed. Additional work not stated will be charged accordingly.